NEWS RELEASE
BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

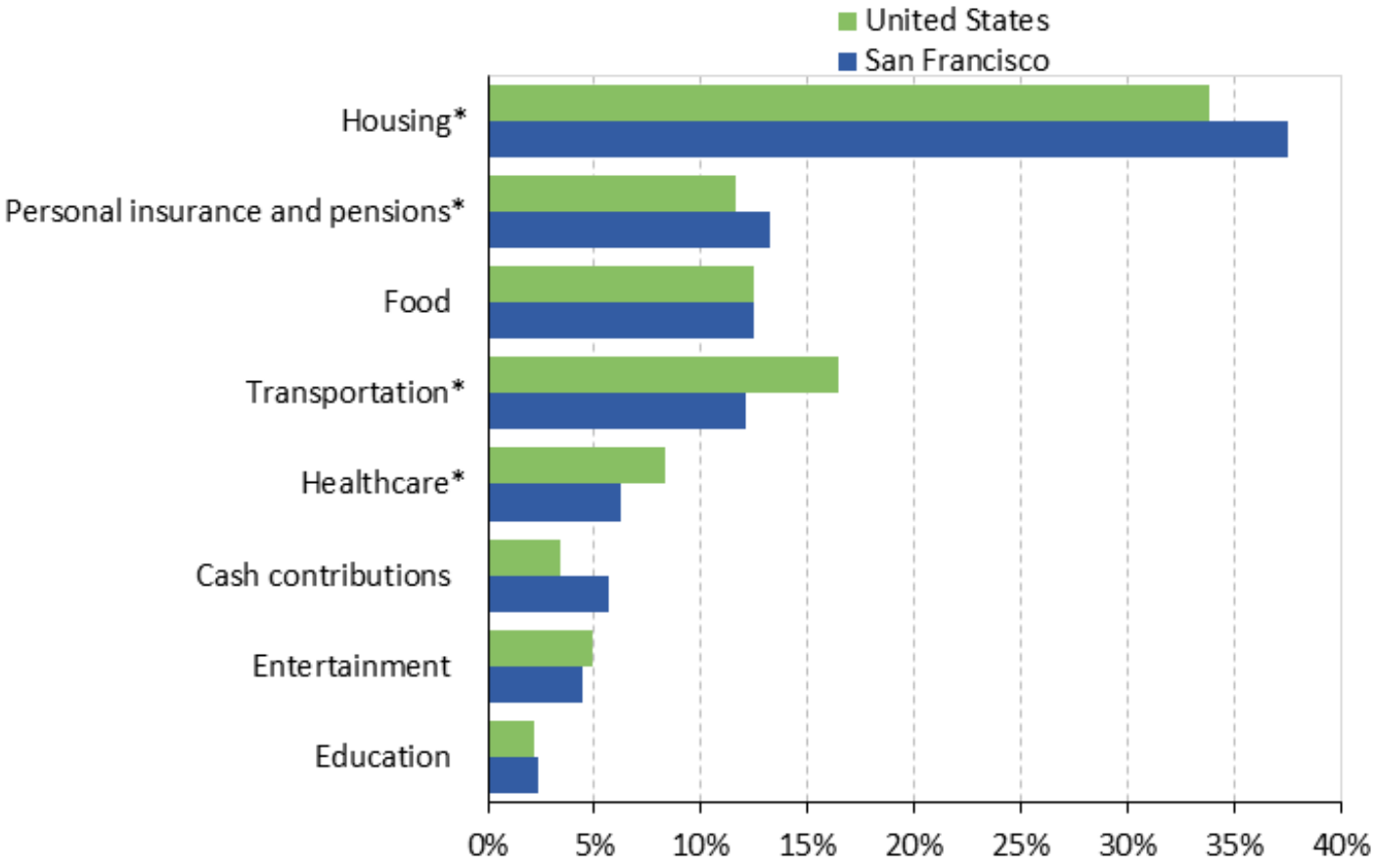
For Release: Wednesday, December 01, 2021 **21-2056-SAN**

WESTERN INFORMATION OFFICE: San Francisco, Calif.
Technical information: (415) 625-2270 BLSinfoSF@bls.gov www.bls.gov/regions/west
Media contact: (415) 625-2270

Consumer Expenditures for the San Francisco Metropolitan Area: 2019-20

Households in the San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA, metropolitan area spent an average of $91,728 per year in 2019–20, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Chris Rosenlund noted that this figure was significantly higher than the $62,188 average expenditure level for households in the United States. San Francisco-area households allocated their dollars similarly to the nation in 4 of the 8 largest major components. Four of the largest components in the local area differed significantly from their respective U.S. averages. For example, the share of expenditures for healthcare, which accounted for 6.2 percent of the average household's budget in the San Francisco area, was significantly lower than the national average of 8.3 percent. (See chart 1 and table 1.)

Chart 1. Shares of average expenditures for selected major components in the United States and San Francisco metropolitan area, 2019–20



Note: An asterisk indicates a statistically significant difference at the 95-percent confidence level.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Highlights of the San Francisco area's 2019-20 spending patterns:

Housing: This was the largest expenditure component for San Francisco-area households and averaged $34,460. Housing accounted for 37.6 percent of the area's household budget, significantly higher than the 33.8-percent U.S. average. (See table 1.) Among the 22 metropolitan areas nationwide for which data were available, San Francisco was 1 of 10 areas to have a housing expenditure share significantly higher than the national average. Housing expenditures shares among the 22 published metropolitan areas nationwide ranged from 39.1 percent in New York to 31.8 percent in St. Louis. (See table 2.)

Transportation: San Francisco-area households spent 12.1 percent of their budget on transportation, significantly lower than the national average of 16.5 percent. Of the $11,139 in annual transportation expenditures in San Francisco, 86.2 percent was spent buying and maintaining private vehicles; this compared to the national average of 94.9 percent.

Food: The portion of a San Francisco household's budget spent on food, 12.5 percent, was not significantly different from the 12.5-percent U.S. average. San Francisco-area households spent $6,702, or 58.6 percent, of their food dollars on food at home and $4,736 (41.4 percent) on food away from home. In comparison, the average U.S. household spent 61.9 percent of its food budget on food at home and 38.1 percent on food away from home.

Additional information

Data in this release are from the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE), which the U.S. Census Bureau conducts for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The data in this release were averaged over a 2-year period, 2019 and 2020.

A household in the CE survey is defined as a consumer unit which includes families, single persons living alone or sharing a household with others but who are financially independent, or two or more persons living together who share expenses. The terms household or consumer unit are used interchangeably for convenience.

Differences in spending among metropolitan areas may reflect differences in the cost of living, but they also may reflect other causes. Spending differences may result from different consumer preferences or variations in demographic characteristics, such as household size, age, or income levels. However, expenditure shares, or the percentage of a household's budget spent on a particular component, can be used to compare spending patterns across areas. Sample sizes for the metropolitan areas are much smaller than for the nation, so the U.S. estimates and year-to-year changes are more reliable than those for the metropolitan areas. Users should also keep in mind that prices for many goods and services have changed since the survey was conducted.

A value that is statistically different from another does not necessarily mean that the difference has economic or practical significance. Statistical significance is concerned with our ability to make confident statements about a universe based on a sample. A large difference between two values may not be statistically significant, while a small difference could be significant; both the sample size and the variation among the values in the sample affect the relative error of the estimates.

For additional technical and related information, see www.bls.gov/opub/hom/cex/home.htm. Data for the nation, the four geographic regions of the U.S., and 22 metropolitan areas nationwide are available at www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm. Metropolitan definitions used in the survey are available at www.bls.gov/cex/ce_msa_201516.htm. The metropolitan area discussed in this release is the San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA Metropolitan Statistical Area which comprises Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo Counties in California. Metropolitan area news releases for the Consumer Expenditure Survey are available at www.bls.gov/regions/subjects/consumer-spending.htm.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 800-877-8339.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Impact on 2019-2020 Consumer Expenditure Surveys Data for Metropolitan Statistical Areas

Data presented in this release reflect data collected both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, data collection by personal visit for the CE program was suspended March 19, 2020. Instead, data were collected either online or by phone. Data collected in 2019 and prior to March 19, 2020, were conducted by personal visit. More information about the impact of the pandemic on CE data is available at www.bls.gov/covid19/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-and-response-on-the-consumer-expenditure-surveys.htm.

Table 1. Average annual expenditures, characteristics, and percent distributions, United States and San Francisco metropolitan area, 2019–20

Category	United States	San Francisco
Consumer unit characteristics:		
Income before taxes	$83,599	$156,851
Age of reference person	51.9	53.3
Average number in consumer unit:		
People	2.5	2.4
Children under 18	0.6	0.4
Adults 65 and over	0.4	0.4
Earners	1.3	1.4
Vehicles	1.9	1.7
Percent homeowner	65	61
Average annual expenditures	$62,188	$91,728*
Percent distribution		
Total	100.0	100.0
Food	12.5	12.5
Alcoholic beverages	0.9	1.1
Housing	33.8	37.6*
Apparel and services	2.7	2.3
Transportation	16.5	12.1*
Healthcare	8.3	6.2*
Entertainment	4.9	4.4
Personal care products and services	1.2	1.1
Reading	0.2	0.1
Education	2.2	2.3
Tobacco products and smoking supplies	0.5	0.1*
Miscellaneous	1.5	1.3
Cash contributions	3.4	5.7
Personal insurance and pensions	11.6	13.2*

Note: An asterisk (*) represents a statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level.

Table 2. Percent share of average annual expenditures for housing, transportation, and food, United States and 22 metropolitan areas, 2019–20

Area	Housing	Transportation	Food
United States	33.8	16.5	12.5
Anchorage	33.5	14.4*	14.1*
Atlanta	35.7	13.9*	15.0*
Baltimore	34.0	16.2	10.6*
Boston	33.8	12.2*	11.9
Chicago	37.6*	14.0	13.8*
Dallas-Fort Worth	37.4*	15.6	10.0*
Denver	34.3	16.8	10.3*
Detroit	32.0*	17.2	12.2
Honolulu	38.7*	13.5*	16.3*
Houston	33.1	16.1	10.5*
Los Angeles	37.8*	15.7	13.1
Miami	38.4*	18.3	11.6
Minneapolis-St. Paul	32.2	14.5	11.2*
New York	39.1*	12.4*	12.9
Philadelphia	35.6	13.5*	11.7
Phoenix	33.8	20.5	10.8*
San Diego	37.2*	13.6*	13.3
San Francisco	37.6*	12.1*	12.5
Seattle	36.7*	13.2*	12.1
St. Louis	31.8*	14.5	11.5
Tampa	34.0	18.4	14.1*
Washington, DC	37.7*	12.3*	11.4*

Note: An asterisk (*) represents a statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level.